



**VIReC**  
Resource Center  
Director: Denise M. Hynes, PhD, MPH, BSN  
**Executive Summary for Fiscal Year 2008**

The VA Information Resource Center (VIReC) mission is to improve the quality of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) research that uses databases and information systems. VIReC's strategic goals are:

Goal 1 Database and Data Quality Knowledge: Create a growing knowledge base of factual and evaluative information about VA and select non-VA data for VA researchers using databases and information systems;

Goal 2 Customer Service and Dissemination: Effectively share knowledge about databases and information systems with researchers; and

Goal 3 Liaison and Development: Represent the interests of VA researchers using databases and information systems.

VIReC serves as a database and clinical informatics resource and referral center for researchers using VA data. VIReC organizes its activities around the three strategic goals and two support functions: Operations Support and Technical Support. VIReC uses a team approach that accomplishes Center goals through standing and ad hoc workgroups. Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 was VIReC's tenth year since its initial funding in 1998.

Four particularly significant VIReC accomplishments in FY2008 were:

1. Coordinated a National Workshop about the Corporate Data Warehouse Vital Signs Data  
VIReC collaborated with Health Services Research & Development (HSR&D) researchers, VA Office of Information & Technology and the HSR&D investigators at the San Antonio Research Enhancement Awarded Program (REAP) to assess the accessibility and quality of the new national vital signs data in the Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW). VIReC coordinated the presentation of the preliminary results of this collaboration at the 2008 HSR&D Annual Research Conference.
2. Publication of "Research User Guide: VHA Pharmacy Prescription Data through 2007"  
VIReC published an updated "VIReC Research User Guide: Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Pharmacy Prescription Data through 2007" on its website. The revised Pharmacy RUG, updates VIReC's 2003 Pharmacy RUG. The RUG includes current information about changes to the database, revised variable descriptions, and an updated bibliography of studies that have used VA pharmacy data. VA researchers use the RUG to design studies involving VA pharmacy data and to work with the VA pharmacy data.
3. Coordination of the VIReC Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar Series  
VIReC provided education within and beyond the VA through coordination of an ongoing cyber seminar series focused on clinical informatics. VA researchers, educators, policy makers and analysts learned about clinical informatics applications in research, both VA and non-VA; and approaches for evaluating clinical informatics interventions.

#### 4. VA Research Policies and Procedures for use of CMS data

VIReC worked closely with HSR&D to convene a Research Advisory Board (RAB) comprising VHA researchers and representatives of the Office of the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Policy and Planning, the Privacy Office, the VA Office of Information and Technology and Hines Institutional Review Board (IRB) to guide VIReC's development of new policies and procedures for research distribution of CMS data in the VA.

In sum, VIReC's efforts in FY2008 made significant contributions to the quality of VA research that uses databases and information systems. VIReC contributions in FY2009 will continue to focus on its three major goals of Database and Data Quality Knowledge; Customer Service and Dissemination; and, Liaison and Development.